



February 11, 2010

My name is Alice Pritchard, and I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF). CWEALF is a statewide non-profit organization dedicated to empowering women, girls and their families to achieve equal opportunities in their personal and professional lives. For 37 years, CWEALF has worked alongside the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW) to engage women, educate the community and illustrate the issues affecting the women living in Connecticut.

PCSW continues to play a critical role in the state to ensure women's voices are heard. Therefore, I am here today to urge your support for the PCSW and to oppose its elimination.

Since its establishment in 1973, PCSW has served as a critical channel in bringing the voices of women to State government by providing information, research and analysis to elected officials and the general public about all matters concerning the status of Connecticut women.

Because of their position, PCSW has the ability to monitor state policy on a broad range of issues. They do so in part by working with numerous coalitions and workgroups to bring women's voices to different discussions and debates. In the past year alone, PCSW was involved in legislative efforts to strengthen women's earning capacity advocating around Equal Pay for Equal Work and Paid Sick Days bills. In this economic climate, these legislative issues are extremely important for women, especially those who are the sole providers for their families.

But their work is not only focused on women's economic position. Equally important is the work PCSW does to focus attention on the quality of services available to women and girls. They have been actively involved in fighting against potential hospital mergers which might limit women's access to reproductive health services. Additionally they sit on the Commission for Child Support Guidelines which addresses how to make the state child support guidelines more effective and family friendly. Both of these issues are vital to strengthening Connecticut's families.

By providing information to state agencies, PCSW saves the state money and improves the performance of these agencies. We continue to see their importance in providing training to state agencies. One example of this service is the sexual harassment training and technical assistance which the Commission has provided state employees and agencies, saving the State government \$400,000. The reduction of sexual harassment complaints also saves state dollars on unnecessary litigation in the future.

Legislators have difficult choices to make over the coming months on how to best balance the state budget. The PCSW has already taken an almost 60% cut to its funding but staff continue to work hard for the women in our state. Eliminating the PCSW is a major step back in the progress of women's issues in the State. It will silence the voices of women and their families in a time when more than ever, their needs and concerns must be heard. By eliminating such an invaluable resource, the State risks undoing the strides in women's rights and thus the progress of the State and its citizens.

Thank you.